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Messenger File Photo

Sen. Bernie Sanders.

Sanders: Trump's Iran 'bluster' harmful

Leahy, Welch also criticize withdrawal from nuclear deal

By MICHELLE MONROE
Messenger Staff

WASHINGTON, D.C. — All three members of Vermont's Congressional delegation were critical of President Donald Trump's decision to withdraw from the seven-nation Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), more commonly called the Iran nuclear deal, on Tuesday.

The agreement, reached in 2015 by multiple countries including Russia and China, as well as the U.S.'s major European allies — France, Germany and Britain — lifted economic sanctions against Iran and encouraged Iran's participation in the world economy in exchange for an end to Iran's efforts to develop nuclear weapons.

The deal's provisions include extensive inspections.

In a statement, Rep. Peter Welch, D-Vt., noted that both inspectors and the Pentagon agree Iran has complied with the agreement. "The carefully-negotiated Iran nuclear agreement has resulted in the most stringent verification and monitoring standards ever imposed

on a nation, preventing Iran from developing or obtaining a nuclear weapon," Welch said in a written statement. "By carelessly casting it aside, President Trump has manufactured an international crisis that risks an armed conflict with a nuclear Iran. In doing so, he thumbed his nose at the grave warnings of our allies and ignored assurances by senior military officials and independent inspectors that

Iran is, in fact, in compliance with the terms of the agreement."

Iran is a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, which means it has agreed not to develop nuclear weapons. In addition, the country has agreed to ratify the International Atomic Energy Agency's Additional Protocol in 2023, which

would increase inspectors' ability to monitor its nuclear activities.

"The president offers no strategy on Iran," Welch said. "He offers no vision on the Middle East. And where American leadership is required, he has consistently displayed an ignorance of the complexity of world challenges as well as an inability to protect American

'Bluster and Iran-bashing will not get us to a better future.'

Sen. Bernie Sanders

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Iran

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interests abroad."

In a speech broadcast live on Facebook, Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., too, took issue with Trump's handling of the Iran deal, stating he heard no strategy from the president, just "bluster."

Sanders cited a letter written by 26 Israeli military and security officials who supported the deal. They wrote: "The consensus among military and intelligence agencies around the world — including Israel's own defense community — is that the pact is working... Israel's security interests would be served best if the United States chooses to remain in the agreement, and work with its allies and other parties to the agreement on further diplomatic actions to address other aspects of Iranian policy in the Middle East."

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu disagrees, and went on cable television in the U.S. last week to make a Powerpoint presentation which appeared to be intended to sway Trump into abandoning the deal.

Sanders went on to note that "Withdrawing from the agreement could not only free Iran from the limbo placed on its nuclear program, it would seriously harm America's ability to negotiate future nonproliferation agreements, such as one with North Korea. Why would any country in the world sign such an agreement with the United States, and make the difficult concessions, if they thought that a reckless president might simply discard that agreement a few years later?"

The U.S. should be seeking to engage Iran, argued Sanders. "Bluster and Iran-bashing will not get us to a better future. Ultimately, we must seek a better relationship with the Iranian people and a more constructive role for Iran in the region," he said. "Trump's bellicose rhetoric today makes achieving those goals more difficult. It will strengthen the regime's hardliners, who are much more comfortable dealing with a hostile America than with a reasonable, peace-seeking one. After 17 years

of war in Afghanistan and 15 years of war in Iraq, the American people do not want to be engaged in never-ending wars in the Middle East."

Those never-ending wars, he noted, were the end of a path laid well before 2003 American invasion of Iraq. "The Iraq war had enormous unintended consequences that we are still dealing with today, and will be for many years to come," said Sanders. "Indeed, one of those unintended consequences was the empowering of Iran in the Middle East."

"It is folly to imagine that, having unleashed these problems through the misuse of military force, we can solve them in the same way. Real American leadership, and real American power, is not shown by our ability to blow things up, but by our ability to bring parties together, to forge

international consensus around shared problems, and then to mobilize that consensus to address those problems. That is what this agreement did."

In a statement on his Twitter account, Sen. Patrick Leahy said, "Withdrawing from the Iran nuclear agreement is a monumental mistake by the President, who is fulfilling a dangerous campaign promise that puts politics over the security of the American people and our closest allies. It hurts to see America breaking its word."

The President has persisted in claims that the Obama administration paid cash to the Iranian government as part of the deal, despite the fact that this is simply not true, as numerous fact checkers have pointed out. Billions in assets belonging to the Iranian government were frozen in foreign banks as

part of the nuclear sanctions. Lifting the sanctions restored Iran's access to its own money.

In addition, prior to the Iranian Revolution in 1979, Shah Reza Pahlavi's government had paid the U.S. \$400 million for arms. But then the Shah was overthrown and the arms were never sent. The money was

never returned. As part of the deal, the U.S. agreed to return that \$400 million, giving the country back its own money. The first of those payments arrived on the same day Iran released four Americans it had detained. The Obama administration said the timing was a coincidence.

An open letter to Sanders: *BR, 5/8, 14* #berniegotogaza

Editor of the Reformer:

Brattleboro Solidarity is helping to get letters to Bernie around the urgent situation in Gaza! As of May

2, 2018 over 120 individuals and organizations throughout Vermont and western Massachusetts have signed on. This is an ongoing campaign. If you would like to sign on please email us at brattleborosolidarity@gmail.com

Dear Senator Sanders,

On March 31st, 2018 you tweeted: "The killing of Palestinian demonstrators by Israeli forces in Gaza is tragic. It is the right of all people to protest for a better future without a violent response."

The situation in Gaza is of the utmost urgency as the conditions on the ground continue to deteriorate and peaceful demonstrators are killed and injured by the Israeli state. We agree with you that the United States should call on Israel to stop their ongoing siege of the Gaza strip and cease their open fire on peaceful, non-violent demonstrators. We believe that you play an important role in bringing the world's attention to Gaza and highlighting the United States' complicity in the violence. We are asking that you go to Gaza to meet the people, see the situation for yourself and discuss with the Palestinian people the best way to support them. This gesture would show the world that the United States cares about what is happening on the ground in Gaza and that we say no to the Israeli siege on Gaza against peaceful, non-violent protest.

A 2017 United Nations report found that Gaza is "unlivable" due to the now 12 year Israeli blockade. The lack of livelihood, employment, adequate healthcare, education, electricity and clean water are testament to the urgency of the situation. Of note, the report found that Gaza's only water source is predicted to be "irreversibly depleted" by 2020 unless immediate action is taken. The United States must not sit back and watch while Palestinians die. As your constituents, and in solidarity with those outside of Vermont, we ask that you go to Gaza and let Vermont lead the way in support of the 2 million people living in Gaza, more than half of them children. The moment is critical. We urge you use your position to act in justice and

call for an end to the siege.

Please go to Gaza.

Sincerely,

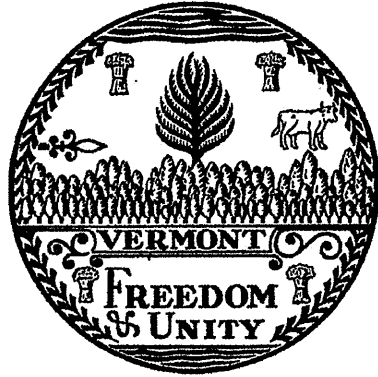
Brattleboro Solidarity, May 3

Crisis upon crisis in Gaza

Editor of the Reformer:

On Sunday Norman Finkelstein spoke at the First Baptist Church about the inhumane conditions in the Israeli-controlled Gaza Strip and the terrible slaughter and war that are imminent. Israel has managed an effective media black-out about the conditions in Gaza, which has been condemned by the UN and is virtually a death camp. The thousands of Palestinians gathering near the fences of Israel may sacrifice themselves to show their desperation to an un-hearing world. They will storm the fences of Israel on the 14th of this month, Nakba Day, which commemorates the expulsion of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians from their homeland during the Israeli war for independence in 1948. The Israelis warn that no re-entry will be tolerated, regardless of the conditions in Gaza. Even as the protesters have gathered peacefully in recent weeks, Israeli soldiers have killed forty of them, including children, and injured a thousand. According to Finkelstein and the New York Times, "Videos showed that some, were shot while they had their backs turned to the fence." Since Bernie Sanders has publicly expressed sympathy for the Palestinians, we must prevail on him to visit Gaza. The media and cameras will follow and inhibit Israel forces from slaughtering the Palestinians as they storm the gates. Such an incident may trigger a terrible multilateral war, which is what Trump and some other people want. Call Bernie's office. CALL HIM NOW (802) 862-0697! This is an emergency !! We must stop the Israeli forces from continuing to decimate Palestinians. The Palestinians must continue to resist non-violently. Bernie must intervene to avoid another massacre, like the Masada, or worse.

*Urgently,
Kurt Daims
Brattleboro, May 2*



Articles of Interest

Vermont

Scott to study drug importation bill

ASSOCIATED PRESS

MONTPELIER – Republican Gov. Phil Scott plans to study a bill passed by the Legislature that would set up a first-in-the-nation system to allow the state to import prescription drugs from Canada before deciding whether to sign it, a spokeswoman said Wednesday.

Scott spokeswoman Rebecca Kelley said there were many questions about whether the bill, intended to reduce drug costs, complies with federal law, puts Medicaid rebates at risk or would have an administrative infrastructure that would eat up any consumer savings.

"As the governor has said throughout this discussion, he shares the goal of making prescription medication more affordable," Kelley said.

Dozens of states across the country proposed a variety of ways to save money on prescription drug costs this year, including some that suggested importing drugs from Canada.

The National Academy for State Health Policy says Vermont is the first state in the nation to approve the importation of prescription drugs from Canada,

"As the governor has said throughout this discussion, he shares the goal of making prescription medication more affordable."

Rebecca Kelley
Gov. Scott spokeswoman

da, where they cost an average of 30 percent less than in the United States.

The Vermont bill creates a mechanism to import drugs that are costly in the United States so less expensive drugs can be made available to Vermonters.

The bill received unanimous support in the Senate and was approved 141-2 in the House.

The Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America, a trade group for drugmakers, has argued the proposals would threaten people's health because quality could not be assured.

The idea of importing less expensive drugs from Canada has been around for decades. Since 2003 federal law has allowed the U.S. health secretary to give states permission to import drugs, but such permission has never been granted.



Gov. Phil Scott plans to study a bill that would set up a first-in-the-nation system that allows the state to import prescription drugs from Canada.

APRIL MCCULLUM/FREE PRESS

House votes for minimum wage increase

Governor has vowed veto

by XANDER LANDEN
/TDigger.org

MONTPELIER — The House advanced a bill Tuesday that would raise the minimum wage from the current \$10.50 an hour to \$15 an hour by 2024.

In a narrow vote of 77-69, representatives gave preliminary approval to S40, a proposal Democratic lawmakers have championed as a vehicle to boost income for tens of thousands of Vermonters and lift many low-wage workers out of poverty.

The vote is a victory for Speaker of the House Mitzi Johnson who last year had difficulty rallying support for issues that split the caucus. With the minimum wage vote, Johnson showed she can muster backing for controversial legislation.

Senate leader Tim Ashe

pushed ahead with paid family leave legislation on Tuesday in a reciprocal move after the House vote on minimum wage.

While the minimum wage bill looks destined to pass out of the Legislature, Gov. Phil Scott has said he would veto it.

Tuesday's vote showed that the bill's supporters do not have the two-thirds majority needed to override a veto. Republicans have just enough votes to uphold the governor's veto, and a number of Democrats joined them in voting against the minimum wage bill.

The House debated the bill for hours on Tuesday, with discussion focused on the consequences a minimum wage hike would have on Vermont's economy.

Many opponents repeated the refrain that raising the

wage would burden small businesses and lead job losses. Others argued that passing the proposal would improve the livelihoods of low-income Vermonters at a time when cost of living is already high and only mounting.

The bill would increase wages for 65,000 people by 2024, according to Sen. Michael Sirotkin, D-Chittenden, one of the sponsors of the legislation.

Under the current pay rate, a worker with a full-time minimum wage job makes only about \$22,000 per year.

"People ought to be able to go to work, work hard and have the dignity to know that that wage they're bringing home...is helping them to meet their family's basic needs," Rep. Sarah Copeland Hanzas, D-Bradford said on the House floor.

Supporters of the bill said that giving workers additional buying power would make for a healthy economy, sending

more money flowing into local businesses and more tax dollars into state coffers.

"That individual is now a consumer and they will spend their money and a lot of it will be spent locally," Paul Poirier, I-Barre City, said on the floor. "You'll be helping your small stores and so forth."

But opponents of the bill painted a dire picture of what they believed a \$15 minimum wage would mean for Vermont: struggling businesses, fewer jobs and increased prices for goods and services.

"Imagine the impact an increase in the cost of fuel, transportation, utilities, food and clothing, would have on the purchasing power of low-income Vermonters," Rep. Heidi Scheuermann, R-Stowe, told the House.

"Imagine the impact these increases will have on our small retail establishments already struggling to

stay competitive with online retailers," she said.

The House's preliminary approval of the minimum wage proposal came after the House Appropriations Committee voted the bill out of committee on Friday without its recommendation.

The committee found it difficult to come to consensus on the proposal in part because economists have drawn different conclusions about the outcomes of raising the wage, according to Rep. Kitty Toll, D-Danville, who chairs the committee.

While some say it puts more money into the economy and people's pockets, others say it leads businesses to transition to hiring fewer employees and increases the cost of goods.

Janet Ancel, D-Calais, who chairs the House Ways and Means Committee, said changes in federal tax policy have created favorable conditions for a minimum wage

increase.

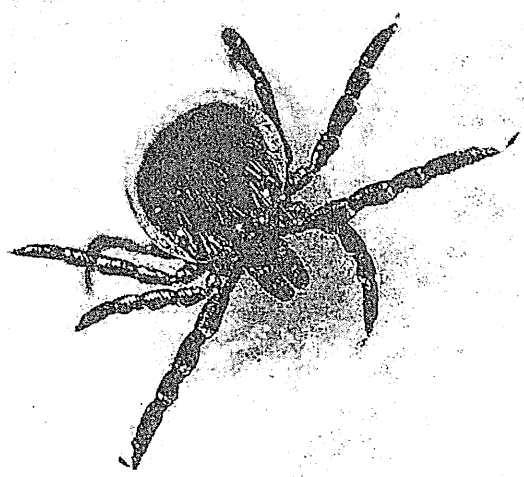
Ancel said federal tax cuts will save Vermont businesses between \$250 million and \$300 million this year. The cuts will continue for years and in some cases indefinitely, she said.

"We heard that an increase in the minimum wage will hurt Vermont businesses. That's a concern that we need to take seriously," Ancel said.

"But if there was ever a time to adopt a higher minimum wage, it seems to me that the year when our Vermont businesses have been given a tax cut of almost \$300 million, all the courtesy of the federal government, is just exactly that time," she said.

S40 is expected to pass in a final vote in the House on Wednesday. The bill will then return to the Senate, which passed the proposal in February and needs to approve House changes before it goes to the governor.

Climate change may be linked to increase in ticks



ninety-nine percent of all tick-borne diseases reported are caused by the blacklegged tick, according to the Vermont Department of Health. GETTY IMAGES

A CDC study finds tick-borne diseases are getting worse

Nicole Higgins DeSmet
Burlington Free Press
USA TODAY NETWORK

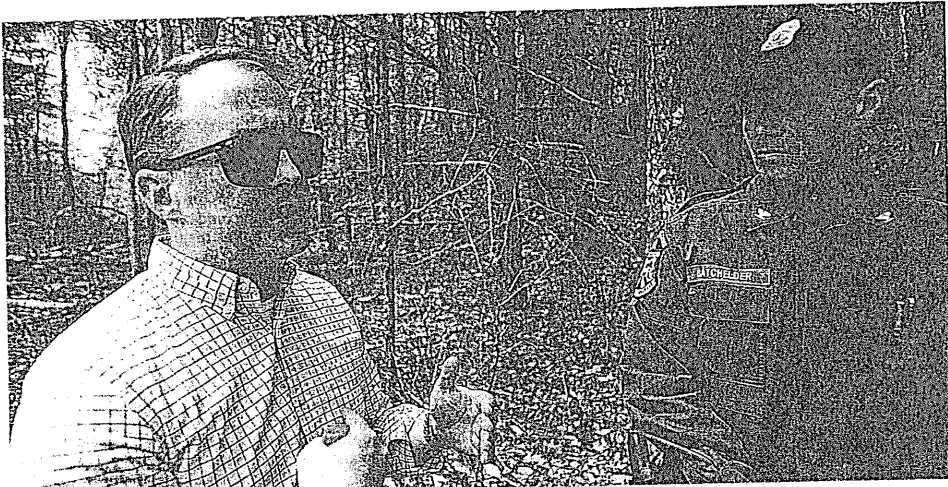
Ticks will still plague Vermonters who love the outdoors, regardless of the long cold winter.

"Even when we get a winter like this, which is a throwback to the good old days, there's still a bunch of them out there," Vermont Agency of Agriculture entomologist Judy Rosovsky said on Tuesday regarding what might be a temporary decline in the tick population this year.

Agency specialists are testing ticks as they complete a survey of the pests in the state. So far Lyme disease has been present in approximately 50 percent of the specimens, Rosovsky said. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on May 1 reported that diseases from mosquitoes, ticks, and flea bites tripled in the U.S. from 2004 to 2016.

Mosquitoes and ticks are spreading into new areas putting more people at risk for infection, according to the federal report. And new germs spread by mosquito and tick bites have been discovered further north as the list of nationally notifiable diseases has grown.

Entomologist Rosovsky said the reason why ticks might be spreading in northern states is complicated, but cli-



From left, epidemiologist Bradley Tompkins with the Vermont Department of Health and Vermont Game Warden Col. Jason Batchelder talk about precautions people can take to keep ticks away when in the woods. RYAN MERCER/FREE PRESS FILE

mate change could certainly be playing a part.

"The longer shoulder seasons, fall and spring, give ticks time to find a host to

over-winter," Rosovsky said about the hypothesis she believes could play a part in the tick population explosion, which in turn aids in the spread of tick-born dis-

eases. In the spring, if there's no snow to kill them, adult ticks can drop to the

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Ticks

Continued from Page 3A

ground or a leaf, where they can brush up against an adventurous human, take a blood meal, then drop off to lay eggs.

Vermont leads the nation in Lyme disease cases, with a three-year average of 85.5 confirmed cases per 100,000 residents. It was the highest rate per capita in the nation as of May 2017.

Vermont had 6,161 cases of illness caused by tick-borne diseases from 2004-16. Vermont's disease report ranks the state 16th highest in the number of reported cases, but Vermont has fewer people to infect compared to other states. Tennessee reported similar numbers to Vermont, but Tennessee had 6.7 million residents in 2017 compared with Vermont's 623,657.

Rosovsky said even if there is a setback in the tick population this year: "It won't last."

Adult ticks might be vulnerable to the cold, but larva and nymphs (young ticks) hiding in the ground cover, are not. Also, the agency has not finished conducting its survey which has hit about 200 towns

in Vermont and has about 50 left to assess, according to Rosovsky.

But what do Vermonters have to look out for?

Ninety-nine percent of all tick-borne diseases reported are caused by the blacklegged tick, according to the Vermont Department of Health. Blacklegs are also known as deer ticks because of the ticks' common host: white tailed deer.

Unfed female blacklegged ticks can be distinguish from their brethren by an orange-red body and black head and legs. Males don't have the orange coloring, according to the University of Rhode Island's TickEncounter Resource Center.

Those blacklegs carry bacteria that cause the most common illnesses like Lyme, Anaplasmosis and Babesiosis diseases, which can have overlapping symptoms. The deer tick can also spread the rare Powassan virus.

Other tick-borne diseases have been found in Vermont, according to health department's website.

Protect yourself and your kids

■ Treat clothing with permethrin, a pesticide that can't go on the skin but can repel ticks and even kill them on contact.

■ Buy pre-treated outdoor clothes and

socks from L.L. Bean, REI or other companies.

■ Send your outdoor clothes for treatment at Insect Shield

■ Tuck your pants into your socks. Looks are less important than getting sick!

■ Keep to the center of the trail. Ticks will hang onto plants leaves and wait for a potential meal ticket to brush past. Ticks don't jump.

■ Strip clothes and put them straight into the dryer for 10 minutes on high as soon as you get home.

■ Check your skin for ticks. Take a shower to wash them off, especially the tiny young nymphs that are hard to see.

What if it's attached

■ Don't panic.

■ Use fine-tipped tweezers to grab the tick close to where it's attached. Pull it straight out.

■ Avoid squeezing the tick's body.

■ Wash the area of a tick bite. It won't prevent disease but will help fight infection.

■ Watch for symptoms within the month of a tick bite.

Symptoms of Lyme Disease

■ Symptoms include fever, chills, fatigue, body aches and a headache.

■ Rash can occur from 3 to 30 days at the bite site. Look for a red bullseye around the bite.

■ The disease can cause muscle weakness, numbness and heart problems if it reaches advanced stages.

Symptom list from the Mayo Clinic website

Check your pets

■ Vaccinations for Lyme disease are available.

■ Use prevention, such as a topical or oral treatment.

■ Consider getting a repellent collar.

■ Inspect your pet before it comes inside.

■ Remove ticks with tweezers or a specialty product, grasp ticks by the head, and make sure to remove the mouth parts.

■ If Fido gets bitten, monitor the site for signs of infection, such as redness or swelling.

■ Get Rover tested at least once a year.

■ Joint pain, fever or general sickness could be signs of Lyme disease in your pooch.

Contact Nicole Higgins DeSmet ndesmet@freepressmedia.com or 802-660-1845. Follow her on Twitter @NicoleH-DeSmet.

Vermont *JBPP, 5/10, 4A*

Winooski voters back Main Street rehab

Joel Banner Baird
Burlington Free Press
USA TODAY NETWORK

A \$23 million bond to overhaul Winooski's Main Street and its underground utilities won approval at the polls Tuesday by a 311-to-185 vote, the city reported.

The vote clears the way for a full-steam-ahead effort to secure state and federal funding, and to refine engineering plans, City Manager Jessie Baker said on Wednesday.

"We still have a lot of work to do, and we have a methodical plan in place," Baker said.

Rehabilitation of the road corridor between Interstate 89 and the Winooski traffic circulator would begin at the earliest in 2020 and take at least two years to complete, according to a preliminary engineering report.

City Council will assemble a financing

package by late summer or early fall, Baker said.

Modest increases in property tax and utility rates are likely, she added. Creating a local-options sales tax is also an option — one that neighboring municipalities already have in place.

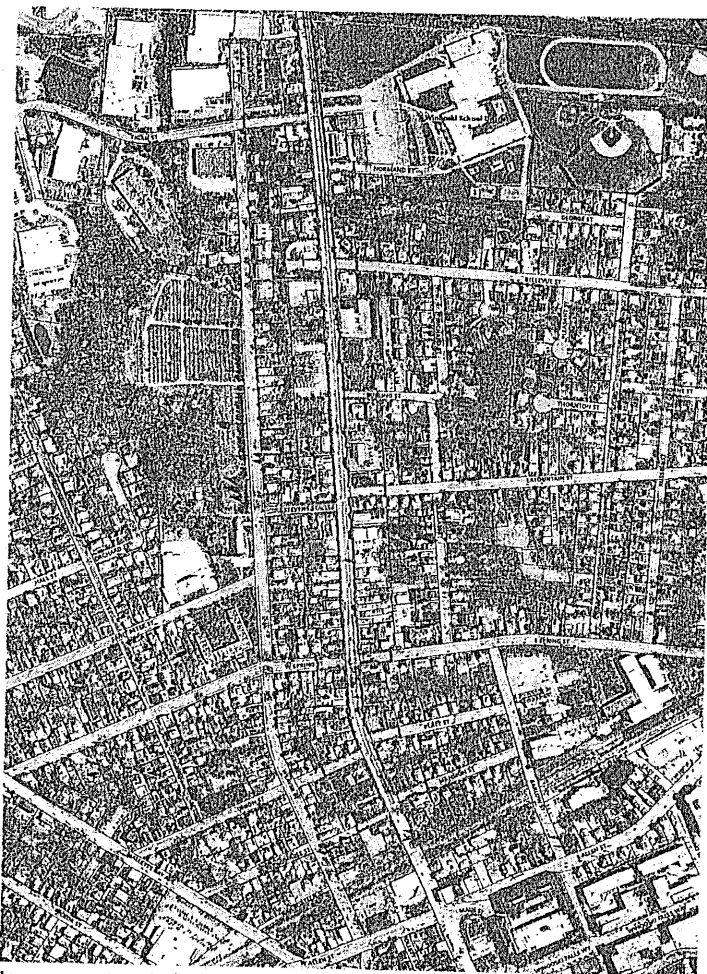
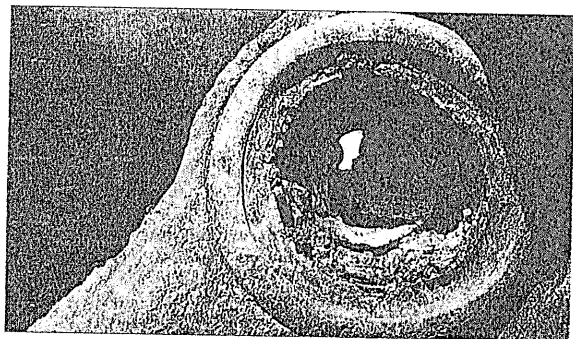
Baker said the city is seeking project grants through the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation and Department of Transportation.

Plans to replace and re-route water, storm and sewer pipes are well underway, said Department of Public Works Director Jon Rauscher.

Power, gas and communications utilities will become increasingly involved in the revitalization project in the coming months, Rauscher added.

Contact Joel Banner Baird at 802-660-1843 or joelbaird@freepressmedia.com. Follow him on Twitter @VTgoingUp.

A corroded and clogged water pipe that was excavated beneath Winooski.
JOEL BANNER BAIRD/
FREE PRESS



Improvements to Main Street in Winooski are shown in this map created by the city's Public Works Department in early 2018. COURTESY CITY OF WINOOSKI